



## Music Matters @ MOPS Term 4 Report

### KEY:

Jingle Sing (JS)

Little Star (LS)

Music Therapy (JMT)

Music Leader (ML)

Key Workers (KW)

CHILDREN: IE, TE, IAN, IM, ON

### Introduction

The Term 4 report for Music Matters @ MOPS describes the musical explorations of new and continuing children into the second year of the project and highlights further evidence of the importance and benefits of musical experiences in this setting. The Music Matters @ MOPS project has embedded music into the education and learning experiences of the children which has supported many new responses, interactions, enjoyment and progression.

Results of the project overall suggest that extended music provision can positively impact musical learning, sensory processing, confidence, communication and engagement. As we start the second year of the project, we see continuation of these benefits in the musical interactions and responses of new attendees, and further musical engagement and learning from continuing students.

### Aims and Outcomes

**Overall Aim: To develop children's participation in group & 1-1 music-making, improve workforce/children's Makaton skills with songs & rhymes & to share the results & benefits of this project.**

Reports from the first year of the project described the impact of time, consistency and familiarity on the children's confidence and musical explorations, enhancing their overall musical skill development. Examples of musical play were observed which involved elements of conducting/leadership, repetition and initiation of the actions and musical features explored. The data provided examples of children's musical play moving beyond exploration to performance of new musical skills and understanding.

The Term 4 report provides new and extended examples of these findings and reflects on each area of the overall aim, exploring further (i) the children's participation and explorations during musical experiences (ii) sensory processing (iii) the benefits of continued use of Makaton (iv) effective practice and staff and ML responses to individual cues and explorations (v) how we interpret musical responses, share our observations and provide ongoing support.

**VIGNETTES 1-5** present new examples of two of the focus children described in the first year of the project, providing continued insight into musical progression over time, as well as three new participants and how they engaged in the musical experiences in Term 4. Observations end with a summary of musical extensions and explorations and areas of effective practise which supported this.

## VIGNETTE 1 - Child: IAN

### **Examples**

**JS: IAN** explores a sensory aid as he moves around in his seat, often turning towards KW. IAN pats his head, for a moment in time to the music, however, this response may reflect sensory challenges and is discouraged by KW. IAN appears excited and vocalises loudly, moving up and down in his seat. KW is supporting IAN to explore the actions of the song. IAN appears accepting of this with a possible smile observed and when he turns around and moves arms away slightly, KW acknowledges IAN's response and discontinues that particular support.

### **VIDEOS: IAN Moving + IAN Sensory**

**JS: IAN** appears to be enjoying the lycra musical experience. ML describes in written observations a calm response from IAN during this activity. IAN has both hands on the lycra and is moving along with it as it goes up and down, possibly smiling. IAN pushes on it, taps it, scrunches up hands and puts head on it. He looks at the sea creatures and then up in the air possibly listening to the song and processing the music. IAN appears engaged and focused and ML notes in written observations for this activity IAN 'listened and stopped when he heard the word "stop" by leaning forward onto the Lycra'.

### **VIDEO: Parachute Fun**

**JMT: ML Written Observation 1:** ML notes progression in musical responses during IAN's second JMT session: 'The big drum was more of a success – IAN was smiling and banging it at times and giving the therapist some eye contact. He appeared to really enjoy this'... 'He reached out to take the bells from me once during 'Pass the Bells', and gave them back with a lot of support. He reached both hands to the guitar during the GS, pressing them against it'.

**JMT: ML Written Observation 2:** IAN attended an extra session with a peer and ML notes even further musical responses. 'They both gave me relatively lots of eye contact, and even began to hold hands at one point which was lovely'. During the 'Pass the Bells' activity IAN 'twice took the bells from me, as well as passing to me twice and once to' his peer.

**Examples from LS Music Sessions over three weeks also highlight a significant change in IAN's musical explorations across a small number of sessions. LS ML also notes previous session responses and IAN often only attending for a short amount of time.**

**LS: Written Observation by ML 1: IAN** 'stayed for the whole session today. He moved around the space a lot but was engaged for most of the session. He enjoyed patting the drum (smiling, eye contact). He wiggled his wrist bells and held the mic'.

**LS: Written Observation by ML 2: IAN** 'stayed again for the whole session. He enjoyed playing the ukes. He was laying down a lot which is unusual for IAN as he usually likes to rush around. Instead today he played lying down and listened to the songs and instruments played'.

**LS: Written Observation by ML 3: IAN** 'stayed for the whole session today. Played my guitar and gave really good eye contact whilst playing'. ML notes that starting to play instruments is a new musical response for IAN as he has become more familiar and confident in the group music setting.

**SUMMARY**

IAN explores in a sensory way often with a sensory aid such as a chew toy. Video data suggests this may support his engagement and focus. Other physical responses are observed including patting his head energetically. This response can be common in children with sensory challenges and due to safety, strategies are often in place to redirect this response. For IAN his KW provides Experiences which support IAN's sensory needs appear to produce longer periods of focus, engagement and musical response. For example, the use of lycra in JS sessions provides tactile and physical sensory input and the musical aspects of the activity provide auditory stimulus. These sensory elements appear to support IAN to focus on the prop/visual stimulus on top of the lycra and the musical sounds.

A variety of musical responses were observed for IAN particularly when free to move or stretch out around the space, supported by KW. We see extended musical explorations including instrumental play and increased engagement over a short number of sessions. Consistent and flexible musical support to redirect this response.experiences can support children with additional needs to build confidence, engage and explore. For IAN this may support further learning, confidence and communicative responses.

## VIGNETTE 2 - Child: ON

### **Examples**

**JS: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML notes an excited response from ON showing awareness and anticipation of what was coming next within the form of the song. ON shares his excited and enjoyment of the song with his peer, laughing and smiling.

**JS: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML notes ON performing all of the actions in the introductory songs and during familiar songs such as 'Zoom Zoom Zoom' and 'Down at the Station'. ML also describes ON's repetition of her verbal phrases and highlights new verbal responses, use of speech and singing from ON within the sessions. In another session ML gives an example of this vocalisation with ON echoing all the words to 'Head Shoulders Knees and Toes'. ML also notes ON copying actions, ways to explore instruments and following musical cues.

**JS: ON** is looking at ocean drum and the sound making items inside, twisting it around to explore their movement. ON stops when he hears ML say, 'are we ready to go'. He smiles and starts shaking his ocean drum. When ML says, 'all play together' he starts to bang the drum in time and mouths 'together' and performs the stop at the end.

**VIDEO:** *TE and ON Drum Exploration*

**JS: ON** moves scarves around following the rhyme with full attention to ML. He mouths the word 'Paul' along to lyric cue and moves one arm for fly away. Smiles at end of song.

**VIDEO:** *ON Poem*

### **SUMMARY**

Observations and video data for ON were included in the Term 3 data of the project and noticeable improvements can be observed during Term 4. JS ML notes new musical responses for ON in Term 4, in particular an increase in vocalising lyrics to songs, performance of particular musical patterns on a variety of instruments and responding to the form and musical cues.

ON appears to have developed confidence in performing his musical understanding and sharing this with the group. ON's interest and enjoyment of music, the provision of extended musical experiences, and the approaches and encouragement from ML and staff have supported ON to practise his communicative and musical skills resulting in new musical learning and interactions.

### VIGNETTE 3 - Child: IM

#### **Examples**

**LS: Written Observation by ML:** ML notes IM sharing attention and consistent eye contact as she sat with him for an extended period of time playing guitar. ML describes IM making gestures to touch the guitar but couldn't quite move his hands to play. 'I could tell he wanted to but for some reason he held back (he has full movement in his hands/arms)'.

**JMT: IM** watches ML face, making eye contact, and occasionally looks at ML guitar. ML is holding out guitar for IM to have a turn playing the strings. IM appears aware and interested in the request to have a turn but does not move hands towards strings. IM maintains attention to ML. He focuses more on guitar when ML moves fingers in a different way with a tapping sound. IM moves hand a little in response to KW request for him to try exploring strings in this way. IM reaches for the guitar then stops, looking towards peer and back to ML perhaps not quite ready to play or is aware of his choice not to play and exploring this understanding. IM appears fascinated by the interaction with ML and is perhaps not wanting to move his focus away from this to play the strings.

#### **VIDEO: IM Guitar**

**JMT: IM** watches ML and attempts to push drum away when ML brings it close. IM also looks towards peer. ML sings and taps along to 'Grand old Duke of York'. IM smiles at ML when he finishes a phrase. He touches drum twice then pushes it away towards ML again. ML moves focus to peer to explore song and IM touches drum twice when ML asks peer if they would like another turn. Perhaps showing he wants a turn and the attention of ML. ML moves drum back to him and he stares at ML intently potentially smiling. ML moves back to peer and IM repeats response. ML turns back to IM and sings song and IM goes to push drum away however stops, perhaps aware ML may interpret this as not wanting a turn and move attention away. IM maintains eye contact as ML sings.

#### **Observation : Full JMT Session - Gathering Drum Section (Approx. 15:20)**

**JMT: Written Observation by ML:** ML notes IM attending this session with KW, no peer today. ML describes IM's musical explorations 'We used the big drum and sang Duke of York, again I modelled how to play for him. He reached out to me to play when I stopped – really clear communication. After grabbing my hand again we played hand over hand. Eventually he began to initiate by lifting our hands up. First he only used RH, then L as well and both at times. He banged the drum 2 or 3 times on his own gently'. ML supported and encouraged IM throughout the session, acknowledging his responses which resulted in independent musical interactions.

**JMT: Written Observation by ML:** In a later session ML notes considerable progression in IM's musical explorations; IM 'seemed unsure about the box of instruments, but then held the beater for around 5 minutes, when previously he has not held onto anything for any period of time. He used it to play the glock with support during 'Make some Noise'. He was watching peer during the drumming 'and with support he was able to first put his hands on the drum, then use my hand to play, then confidently bang it on his own. He was laughing and vocalising by the end of this activity, and smiling and playing'.

## **SUMMARY**

IM appears to really enjoy musical experiences, particularly focused interactions with ML's. IM often observes ML's expressions and vocalisations initially, before focusing on an instrument/resource. IM often shares gestures that appear he would like to explore instruments, however, does not always explore them physically and moves arm away when offered support. At times this appears to be part of the musical interaction itself and IM sharing his understanding of choice making and using this as a communicative tool to interact with ML. This is important for children who may struggle with communication. Having a tool to explore ideas and preferences opens up self-understanding and builds confidence. Familiarity with the musical experiences and consistent ML and staff approaches have supported IM to gain confidence and develop his musical interactions. Written observations and video data suggests that IM has made considerable improvements in a short space of time in both his engagement and musical explorations during JMT and LS sessions.

## **VIGNETTE 4 - Child: TE (Continuing)**

### **Examples**

**JS: TE** appears to be enjoying the lycra activity. She chooses a sea creature from the top and then throws it back in, choosing a different one and exploring this before throwing it in again, smiling throughout. The sensory nature of the activity including tactile, visual, physical and auditory stimulus within a musical structure, supports TE to engage, extending her focus as she listens, explores and moves along to the song.

**VIDEO: Parachute Fun**

**LS:** both ML and KW note significant progression in TE's use of the microphone. TE holds the microphone confidently, taking the lead within the session and exploring sounds, standing up and moving around the room as she looks at ML, making eye contact, aware of the interactive elements of the experience. TE creates different vocal sounds experimenting with which ones create echo sounds in the special echo microphone. ML notes TE's fascination with the microphone and ability to hear her own voice in a different, amplified way.

**VIDEO: TE Mic Sounds**

**LS: Written Observation by ML:** When the gathering drums were put out, TE called out the drum warm up lyric cue '1 2 Hey' and put her arms up to cue ML to begin the drum intro activity.

### **Summary**

TE has become confident exploring the microphone, instruments and props. Her musical responses are both exploratory and reflect the sounds, rhythmic and melodic patterns and lyrics of the musical experiences. TE is very familiar with LS sessions, anticipating familiar activities, and initiating the musical patterns and vocal phrases for different songs and activities. She is building her leadership skills, performing musical patterns and sounds consistently with awareness of her own performance within the ensemble.

## VIGNETTE 5 - Child: IE (Continuing)

### **Examples**

**LS:** IE is being supported by KW in an upright position moving gently along to song. IE appears engaged and content with this and may look towards ML who is singing and playing guitar. IE makes a down movement and KW acknowledges this as IE potentially wanting to sit down and they continue with the song movement cues sitting down.

### **VIDEO: IE Dancing**

**LS:** IE has her arm on the gathering drum which has been placed there by KW. IE appears content to have arm there and may be looking in the direction of ML listening, feeling the vibrations as peers tap around her.

### **VIDEO: IE Drumming 1**

**LS:** Another example of IE during gathering drum exploration shows IE lying with her head on the gathering drum supported by KW. Another child taps briefly on the gathering drum and ML stops singing and playing to check with KW if IE is enjoying the experience. IE suddenly vocalises loudly when ML drumming stops which is interpreted by ML and KW as a signal for more and IE stops vocalising instantly as ML drumming continues. IE looks up potentially towards ML appearing engaged and content her request was responded to.

### **VIDEO: IE Drumming 2**

**LS:** During the use of the microphone IE lifts self-up suddenly, appearing to show her awareness and excitement that it is her turn to vocalise in the microphone. IE vocalises at the correct time with a loud sound twice, sharing a clear musical response and communicating her understanding of both the activity, musical interaction and how to share her musical ideas.

### **VIDEO: IE Mic**

### **SUMMARY**

In Term 3 we described IE becoming more familiar with the music sessions, building her confidence and musical expressions. In Term 4 we see further progression and confidence with IE practising her musical interactions, resulting in new musical and communicative skills and responses.

KW's play a significant role in supporting IE and data across the project shows multiple examples of KW's ability to (i) sensitively support IE in a way which encourages her independence (ii) support IE to explore each resource and activity and share her preferences. KW's are continuously observing interactions for cues and signs that children are enjoying an activity or would prefer to try a different way. They also affirm responses, attaching meaning, to support further communication and engagement. Interpretation is a key part of these observations and KW's and LS ML know IE so well that they are able to support her and extend her musical interactions. IE appears to be fully engaged when supported in this way as it allows her to connect to the experience and practise new skills and understanding as well as share preferences and musical ideas.

The Microphone has been an engaging resource for many of the children and appears to be a favourite of IE's. Over time IE has begun to understand the use of the microphone and fully engage in the experience, performing and sharing her musical ideas using her voice, focusing sound into the microphone and interacting with ML.



## **Outcome 1 - MUSICAL**

**To improve group/ensemble music making experiences that enable MOP's children to develop performance skills.**

As we move into the second year of the Music Matters at MOPS project, we see further examples of musical achievements and benefits for both continuing children and those new to the setting. The Term 3 report suggested that musical achievement, however this presents, occurs when children gain confidence through sensory and musical explorations, supported by effective practise. In Term 4 we see further examples of these musical achievements highlighted in **VIGNETTES 1-5**.

Term 4 also highlights (i) the continued prominence of sensory considerations in this cohort (ii) resources which encourage musical responses such as the use of the microphone and sensory props in combination with musical experiences (iii) reflective practise, awareness, interpretation and response to children's cues and communications.

### **Sensory Considerations**

Reporting from the project as a whole consistently highlights sensory needs and behaviours having a significant impact on the musical experiences of the children at MOPS. We note changes in engagement, communication and musical learning when sensory needs are supported and considered. The Term 4 report provides further examples of sensory behaviours and needs and how they interact with musical experiences and highlights areas of interpretation and reflection in our understanding of sensory responses.

Understanding the sensory needs of children and young people, particularly those with additional needs, is vital. Many of the responses and behaviours observed which may cause challenges for children often relate to sensory processing difficulties. Data suggests that sensory needs are often supported through multisensory musical explorations resulting in new responses and learning. As children build confidence and explore new responses further, musical achievements can be observed.

Sensory considerations are described in **VIGNETTES 1 – 5** relating to many of the focus children’s musical explorations. **VIGNETTE 6** outlines further sensory responses observed in Term 4. Discussion on sensory considerations also falls part of Outcome 3 as we explore interpretation of responses and effective practise.

### **VIGNETTE 6 – Sensory Responses**

#### **Examples**

**JMT: Written Observation by ML:** ML describes the musical explorations of IAN in his first music session where some sensory challenges were observed with IAN appearing a little unsettled. Musical explorations were still observed however: ‘He shook one set of bells during ‘Make Some Noise’ with support and began to give tentative eye contact to me. He played the drum strongly a few times, which staff were very pleased with’.

Musical instruments can provide sensory input which allow children with sensory challenges to process their sensory needs in a different way. These initial musical explorations appeared to provide the sensory input needed for IAN and the musical experience, even if only briefly, appeared to captivate IAN resulting in continued musical play.

**LS + JS:** We noted in the first year of the project that TE’s initial explorations were often sensory in nature with musical understanding coming through within sensory play. These sensory explorations continue to be accommodated into her musical exploration and new musical learning can be observed. This includes performance of musical patterns and phrases which reflect different activities and songs from the sessions. Some of these new responses are outlined in **VIGNETTE 4**.

**LS:** One child is sitting away from the group on the mini trampoline exploring the guitar. He appears very content strumming the strings. He explores the sound of strumming the strings letting them ring and then stops them with his hand. This child can be observed on other occasions with the guitar slightly away from the group. This appears to be a safe space for this child to explore the musical experience. Ensemble experiences can be a little challenging initially for some children particularly if there are sensory difficulties. This child is supported to explore in this way and perhaps new responses will begin to emerge as the sessions continue.

**VIDEO: Guitar Exploration 1**

#### **SUMMARY**

Musical experiences can offer multisensory input and for those with additional sensory needs this can provide the stimulus and motivation to support attention, exploration, enjoyment and new responses and learning. Auditory, tactile, physical and visual elements all fall part of many musical experiences where children can listen, move, play and explore freely. In Term 4 we see ML’s and staff encouraging and supporting those who want to explore in different ways to do so successfully and safely, proving time and space for this to occur. Musical experiences can be captivating, exciting and engaging for young children and for those with sensory needs this can support engagement and learning.

## **Sensory Resources – Microphone**

In Term 4 we also discuss the use of sensory aids and resources combined with the musical experiences which support sensory and musical exploration.

**VINGETTE 1** outlines IAN's use of a sensory aid and the benefits this may have had on his engagement and participation. **VINGETTE 1 AND 4** outline the use of the lycra and IAN and TE's enjoyment, engagement and musical responses during this activity. The use of percussion in sensory exploration is also highlighted in **VINGETTES 3 AND 5**.

The microphone falls part of these sensory resources and is a tool which consistently evokes musical responses and explorations. The Term 1 report presented examples of the use of the microphone in LS sessions and the positive results observed in vocal explorations. Term 4 data highlights the return of the microphone into LS sessions and introduction into JS sessions and provides further evidence of its benefits and how it has been successfully incorporated into ensemble musical experiences. **VIGNETTES 4 AND 5** include examples of TE and IE exploring the microphone in LS sessions and how their communication, performance and musical skills have been extended through these explorations.

**VIGNETTE 7** describes further examples of the use of the microphone in Term 4.

## VIGNETTE 7 – Microphone

### *Examples*

**LS: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML describes varying responses observed during the use of the microphone in her sessions: (i) some children 'looked at the microphone inquisitively but chose not to make a sound' (ii) IE 'as soon as the microphone came near her made lots of vocal sounds' (iii) one child created quiet sounds on the microphone (iv) one child 'looked at the microphone and made attempts to eat, lick and sniff it' (v) TE wanted the microphone for herself and held it independently making lots of sounds with her favourite being high-pitched laughing and long giggles (vi) one child smiled every time the microphone was held out to her 'no sounds but plenty of eye contact and smiling' (vii) one child held the microphone and investigated its structure (viii) IE 'made the sound of the cow MOO really loudly'.

**JS: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML describes the inclusion of the microphone in her sessions 'This was only the second time that I had used them, and they were an absolute hit! I started off with making some funny sounds which the children copied and thought funny and then we tried some animal noises, which went down very well. We sang Twinkle Twinkle Little Star with them and lots of the children were making sounds and some clear words too'.

### **SUMMARY**

A wide range of responses were observed during the use of the microphone in Term 4 including sensory exploration, fascination and responses reflecting complex musical understanding. For IE and TE their explorations with the microphone were clear and confident showing their musical understandings perhaps more distinctly than in other musical explorations.

The microphone is a beneficial tool in supporting performance skills as children's responses can be heard clearly within the group, supporting awareness of their own responses within an ensemble setting. The incorporation of the microphone into LS and JS ensemble sessions has been very effective in supporting vocal and musical explorations. This relied on the support and time given by ML's and staff to allow children to really explore, listen and also accept this amplified sound.

Through the use of effective resources and awareness and response to the sensory needs of the children, continued development of performance skills and musical achievements within the group/ensemble music making experience can occur. How these resources and practises relate to communication development is summarised briefly in Outcome 2.

## **Outcome 2 – PERSONAL**

### **To improve communication in a vocal, emotional or physical way in response to thematic music & singing sessions.**

Outcome 2 has explored communicative responses to music and effective tools and strategies in promoting communication. The first year of the project provided examples of different communicative responses to the musical experiences and progression in the children's vocalisations and interactions.

Term 4 data presents new examples of vocal responses reflecting musical cues and lyrics and increased confidence resulting in the sharing and performance of musical skills and understanding. We also see different ways of sharing preferences, musical ideas, and making choices being interpreted and supported by KW's and ML's. These include vocal, physical and emotional responses through instrumental exploration, movement, physical gestures and vocal requests. These can be observed in the Term 4 focus children's musical explorations in **VIGNETTES 1-5** and in **VIGNETTE 7** with the use of the microphone encouraging different ways of exploring sounds, words, musical ideas and expressions with staff, ML's and peers.

Communicative responses continued to be supported in Term 4 (described further in Outcome 3) by the ongoing use of Makaton and effective practise relating to interpretation of musical cues and responses, supporting children to make choices, engage and explore in their own way.

## **Outcome 3 - WORKFORCE**

**To develop MOP's Workforce Makaton skills to encourage children to sign, sing & hear songs & rhymes.**

In the first year of the project Outcome 3 focused on effective practise and the use of tools, resources and systems, by ML's and staff, to support the participation, communication and musical learning of the children. These systems include the use of Makaton, a primary objective of the project. The Term 4 report provides a brief update based on new data of the continued use of Makaton and discusses effective practise in our observations, interpretations and reflections of the children's musical explorations.

### **Makaton**

All music sessions in the Music Matters at MOPS project utilise Makaton in some way, however, the Term 4 data focuses predominantly on LS sessions and the use of Makaton by MOPS staff. Feedback from LS ML suggests that staff now use Makaton confidently in their daily work. LS ML also suggests it has become seamlessly integrated into her LS sessions with no stops and starts and many of the children consistently singing back their preferences particularly 'more' or 'finished'.

Makaton is a resource which not only provides children with a communicative tool but supports children to take the lead, share their preferences and guide the musical experiences. LS ML suggests that without the incorporation of Makaton into LS sessions it would be difficult to know what the children wanted and ensure each child was able to make choices and share their preferences.

### **Effective Practise**

The Term 4 report also starts to think about the project as a whole and successes observed relating to effective practise. Across the project we see (i) sensitive, responsive approaches (ii) thoughtful delivery (iii) quality resources (iv) consistent observations. Staff and ML's observe the children's responses and cues exploring how they can best support each child's musical and communicative development. This occurs both within the musical moment and after each session through discussions and feedback from KW's and staff.

Supportive strategies observed include (i) repeating experiences based on children's musical responses and enjoyment (ii) allowing more time on experiences to support engagement and sensory exploration (iii) encouraging children to engage in their own way (iv) adapting planning and practises to meet the interests and responses of the children – both in the moment and when reflecting on responses after the sessions.

These strategies can be observed in **VIGNETTES 1-5** describing the Term 4 focus children's musical explorations, particularly in **VIGNETTE 1 and 4**: IAN and IE's musical explorations. **VIGNETTE 7** also explores effective strategies in supporting children's sensory responses.

**VIGNETTE 9** explores further examples from the Term 4 data.

## VIGNETTE 8 – Effective Strategies

### **Examples**

**LS: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML describes one child across two music sessions. ML notes that in the first week the child 'sat throughout the whole session but did not appear to want to join in'. In the second session the child 'gave me eye contact so I cautiously held the guitar out for him to play along with me. He continued to play. As I changed the words to shake your bones he began to giggle and shake the strings on the guitar. Lots of eye contact lots of engagement'.

**LS: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML supports TE's need/request to repeat a song which ML has performed every session from Term 1. TE enjoys repeating responses to this activity which appears to support her focus and engagement potentially throughout the rest of the session.

**JS: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML describes one child who found the up and down movements to a particular song very funny. ML repeated the song a number of times to allow child to enjoy and engage in the experience.

**LS: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML describes one child who had a ukulele and was enjoying it so much ML allowed him to have it for the whole session which resulted in many musical explorations, enjoyment and engagement. 'He tuned it, played it, tapped it mimicking how I lead the session'.

**JS: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML describes that during microphone exploration the children were enjoying it so much she 'decided to spend more time on this section rather than move onto another prop'.

**RR: *Written Observation by ML:*** ML describes one child who 'was laughing during 'Make Some Noise', enjoying the music, and vocalising when I stopped in a way that seemed to indicate wanting more music'. ML repeated song based on this response.

### **SUMMARY**

Staff and ML's are continuously supporting musical explorations through consistency and encouragement, picking up on the children's cues and responses. For example, allowing TE to continue to explore a familiar activity appears to encourage ongoing musical explorations, build TE's confidence and support her need for consistency within the session. This may also have had a positive impact on TE's musical achievements observed across the project.

These examples also fall into Outcome 2 and communication as ML's and staff respond to children's explorations as a form of communication, sharing their musical ideas and preferences. Responses are affirmed through verbal and non-verbal communication and experiences are often extended within the musical moment and across the sessions, to support further communicative responses. At times this involves changing how the session is planned or presented and can support different ways of exploration that may not have been expected.



Building effective strategies and approaches requires staff and ML's to interpret children's responses and make decisions about how best to deliver their sessions. This occurs differently for each of the music sessions within the Music Matters at MOPS project, based on their structure, outcomes and planning. Interpretation is complex and for children and young people with additional needs it is often unclear if our interpretations are always correct. However, interpretations allow us to provide a strategy of support to encourage engagement and attach meaning to experiences which can lead to further communicative and musical explorations and achievements.

The Term 4 Data highlights both positive examples of interpretation and effective strategies as outlined in **VIGNETTE 8** as well as areas which could be considered in a different way. **VIGNETTE 9** discusses examples presented in the Term 4 written observations of potential difficulties with interpretation as well as some considerations surrounding our observations. It is important to note that these examples will also reflect the reporter's interpretations of the data.

## VIGNETTE 9 – Interpretation

### Examples

**LS: KW** is sitting with child who is exploring a guitar away from the group on top of the mini trampoline (Another example of this child is also described in **VIGNETTE 7**). KW strums the strings and taps the bottom of the guitar. Child pushes KW's hands away. Child taps then plays the very bottoms of the strings exploring. KW taps bottom of guitar again and child moves away. It appears this was not what the child wanted in that moment. His guitar explorations may have reflected a particular sensory need which may have been interrupted by KW. This observation could be interpreted as the child not wanting to play as he moved away from the guitar, however, it may also be an example highlighting the (i) difficult and sensitive nature of our interactions (ii) challenges in moment by moment interpretation of responses and attempting to balance support, encouragement to explore, and awareness of sensory needs. This is only a short video example and the child may have returned to explore further at a later time with KW support.

### **VIDEO: Guitar Exploration 2**

**LS: ML** discusses her awareness of sensory needs and responses which may appear a child does not 'like' a particular sound, such as covering ears or removing themselves from the ensemble space. These responses may not be to the sound itself and more to the potential unpredictability of the experience. LS ML suggests that they may actually enjoy that sound from a different instrument and/or become more comfortable with it over time. Term 4 data suggests that changes in responses can occur relatively quickly as observed in **VIGNETTE 1 and 3** in IAN'S and IM's musical explorations.

### **Considerations**

**- Some written observations suggested children were not 'interested' in an activity or did not want to be 'involved', perhaps as they were not responding in a way that was expected for a particular activity.**

As discussed throughout the Term 4 report, supporting children to make choices and share preferences, including how they would like to explore a particular activity is vital in communication development. The concepts of not being 'interested' or 'involved' however, may be a little more complicated and perhaps not something we can presume is the reason for particular responses. It is more likely that challenging or difficult to interpret responses may be sensory in nature.

By reflecting on our observations, we become more aware of our own expectations surrounding particular responses to activities and can consider how each child may be supported to continue their musical explorations. Perhaps this observation could be described as a child not appearing to focus on a particular resource or sound. This could then be extended to list what the child was focusing on, allowing us to consider what support could be provided to meet sensory needs and provoke other responses. This is acknowledged by JMT ML who suggests trying all sorts of music to gauge interaction for a child who appeared to struggle exploring the resources and sounds within a session. different responses and the influence this may have on our observations and interpretations.

***- Observations at times need further clarification. Some descriptions suggest children 'played well' or were 'good' and the meanings surrounding these terms can be unclear.***

Observations using these terms may be reflecting a more detailed understanding of how a child interacted and why, however, these terms are difficult to interpret and do not always add to evidence of the benefits of particular musical experiences as it is unclear what responses they relate to. Describing the particular responses observed and then adding an interpretation allows us to reflect on other meanings which may be relevant and compile an idea of the various musical responses which may be observed. It also allows us to consider our own expectations surrounding

### ***SUMMARY***

Reflective practise allows us to interpret our observations in a more meaningful way to develop strategies which support children's musical and communicative explorations. As we move forward with these areas of interpretation, we will be asking ML's in Term 6 to approach their observations a little differently. This will provide further detail of the successes in effective practise observed across the sessions and support our own understanding of reflective practise. This will be described further in the Term 5 report.

## **Conclusion**

Research projects such as Music Matters @ MOPS are vital in our exploration and understanding of the musical experiences of children with additional needs and how we can best provide quality and adaptable approaches which support engagement, musical learning and progression for each child. It is clear that ongoing consistent musical experiences are vital for children, in particular those with additional needs who may be impacted by different and often challenging sensory processing, creating obstacles for them to engage and access learning experiences.

Music can provide an experience which is free, open and exploratory. This can support those who need time, express their musical ideas in new ways, want to practise favourite experiences for longer and approach resources through sensory explorations. Musical experiences can provide structure and familiarity with an awareness that the expectation is not on a specific response in order to achieve a particular goal and that all responses are valuable and acknowledged. The Music Matters at MOPS project's collaborative approach allows ML's and staff to work together to best understand children's responses and needs and support each child to explore, engage and achieve in their musical journey.